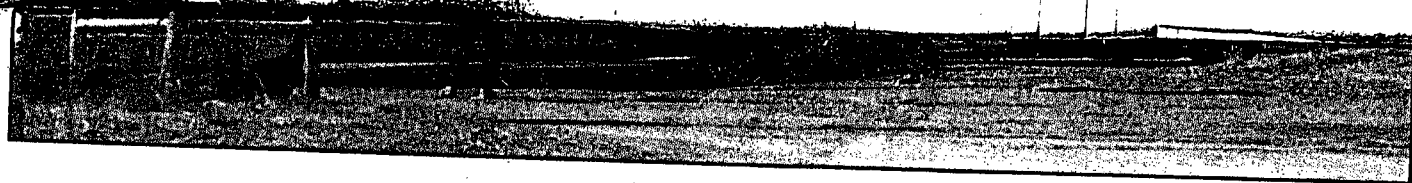


Johno.



A railroad tanker car being lowered onto a tractor-trailer yesterday for transport from the former site of NL Industries in Sayreville to Middlesex County's Fire Training Academy in the borough. The tanker was one of two donated to the Middlesex County Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Unit from American Cyanamid of Linden for training purposes.

KEITH A. MUCCILLI/Staff Photographer

Superfund failed us, Vas says

Lautenberg panel mulls program's future

By ERIC J. GREENBERG
Staff Writer

Pregnant women drinking water contaminated by a Superfund toxic waste site are more likely to have babies with birth defects, U.S. Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg said yesterday as he began hearings to determine the future of the controversial federal Superfund cleanup program.

Lautenberg also said recent scientific studies show that contamination may cause higher cancer rates in people living near toxic waste sites.

Perth Amboy Mayor Joseph Vas was one of several officials to testify yesterday

about the failures and successes of the Superfund program.

Vas testified that cracks in the Superfund program imperiled the drinking water of his city.

"No community should be doomed to repeat this experience," said Vas.

He detailed the city's long and unsuccessful struggle to enlist help and funding from state and federal environmental officials to protect its Runyon Watershed from spreading chemical contamination.

Despite the spreading contamination to the watershed, located in Old Bridge, from two Old Bridge chemical manufacturing firms, the federal Environmental Protec-

tion Agency failed to step in, Vas said.

"This is an example of exactly how the system shouldn't work," said Vas.

He stressed that federal officials should learn from Perth Amboy's experience not to entrust industry to clean up the pollution it caused.

"Industry cannot be trusted to do the right thing," Vas said referring to the nearly 20 years of stonewalling by the two responsible polluters, CPS Chemical Corp. and Madison Industries, both of Old Bridge.

"All too often, industry would rather pay lawyers to help them save money than use the money to save our environment, and save lives," he said.

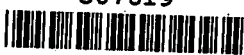
See VAS Page A-4

Auto shops

tation
Ciardi
by a s
attemp
investi
about t
The
twist in
when I
Service
million
remove
between
Yester
Barnett
ment fil
on a req
Christop
previous
In 199
state gra
sanitati
Simeone
with Fra
bridge re
and Com
town \$51
Frank
indicted
employee
giving fal
Last ye
the Cical
charges a
roles in t

See LEAF

507619



4/13/93 News Tribune

weren't
" said
ntained
ming a

But The Essex struggled to
promote themselves around the
mandates of Marine life, and like

lucrative as it is now," said
Johnson. "There comes a point
where you just need some income."

id simultaneo
ty office and
al office, and
the state Legi
ounty or mu

Vas: Superfund failed our city

Continued from Page A-1

Vas said the single most important lesson to be learned from Perth Amboy's experience is that "cleanup of contaminated water supplies must take place first and the arguments about who is responsible and who will pay should not delay implementation of remedial measures."

"What's really at stake for New Jersey?" asked Lautenberg, who also heard from federal and state environmental and health officials about the workings of the controversial \$15 billion, 13-year-old hazardous-waste cleanup program.

"You may face higher rates of death from cancer of the esophagus, stomach, colon and rectum if you live near a toxic waste site," Lautenberg said.

"And if you are unfortunate enough to be directly exposed to one of the dozens of sites where the EPA has taken emergency removals, you may suffer some acute effects that could permanently affect your lungs or nervous system or reproductive ability," he said.

Lautenberg maintained that there is "an urgent need out there to clean up these toxic waste sites before we and our unborn children are poisoned further."

"With 41 million Americans living within 4 miles of a Superfund site — and so many sites in New Jersey — we simply cannot afford to let these sites fester and threaten even more people."

Lautenberg made his comments as he opened the first in a series of hearings to determine the future of the much-criticized program.

Lautenberg is the chairman of the Senate's new subcommittee on Superfund, Recycling and Solid Waste, which will be responsible for re-funding and recommending changes to the landmark legislation.

He said yesterday's meeting kicks off a year of intensive hearings to review "a record of side-tracked and delayed [Superfund] cleanups in the face of significant threats to the health and the environment."

According to EPA officials, New Jersey has the most Superfund toxic sites in the nation with 113.

Middlesex County hosts 10, including at least three in Edison; Monmouth County has nine; and Union County has one.

New Jersey has received nearly \$1 billion from the Superfund program since it began in 1980, more than any other state, EPA officials said.

Superfund seeks payment from industrial polluters for cleanup costs at sites where they are responsible for the contamination.

At "orphan" sites where no responsible party can be determined, the federal government pays for the cleanup from the Superfund, a sum of money collected from a tax on chemical and oil companies.

Critics argue that Superfund has been mismanaged from its

inception, and that millions of dollars are being wasted to clean up sites that might never be reusable.

"As we move into the reauthorization of Superfund, I will be guided by four core principles," Lautenberg said.

"We need to speed up cleanups. We need to spend less money on lawyers and more money on actual cleanups. We need to ensure fairness, particularly for small businesses and municipalities, while insisting that polluters stay liable for cleaning up their mess."

"And we need to eliminate the waste, fraud and abuse that has detracted from the merits of the program."

"Here in New Jersey," he said, "we have a long history of industrial activity and we're the most densely populated state in the nation. We also rely on ground water as a primary source of drinking water."

Echoing Lautenberg's concern about the health effects of hazardous waste sites on humans were Dr. Jeffery Lybarger, director of Division for Health Studies at the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry in Atlanta and Dr. Howard M. Kipen, of Rutgers University's Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute.

Kipen said there is a clear relationship between health problems and exposure to hazardous waste from a Superfund site, but more research is necessary to determine its extent.

Kipen said one problem is that physicians are not trained to diagnose symptoms caused by hazardous-waste exposure.

He said he has treated a family, a firefighter, and two EPA workers who were made sick by the hazardous waste at the White Chemical Inc. Superfund site in Newark, and who suffered "long term, perhaps permanent" respiratory problems.

"There's no doubt it's from the site in question," he said.

But, he said, because of poor training for medical doctors on this subject, it took months before the firefighter was diagnosed.

Lybarger agreed with Lautenberg's contention that cleanup of Superfund sites will prevent future exposure to neighboring residents.

But he added that it would not necessarily eliminate the risk to those already exposed to the contamination.

However, not everyone came to condemn Superfund yesterday.

Scott Weiner, commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and Energy said Superfund is being unfairly maligned and is in fact "responsible for a great deal of remediation work in New Jersey."

Weiner said New Jersey has received \$957 million from the federal Superfund, "putting our state at the top of the list of recipients of Superfund dollars."

Mikulak believing poses a deprives voter participation.

contains a g exempting an office when th o serve out

ents of the bill it passed this Republican legislative c odbridge M eevey, who is ate candidate t, and Perth A ph Vas, another running for ne district.

d Vas have in o hold state a ted.

that he resign s Board of Ed

nt t

helped organiz can't go any

three years, partment will annually to hire ervisors. The w about 30 te in student

partment will ant manage- termine how

YO AF1

off

ties is twice presence of three times

more than hospitalized a higher rate putations.

however, that ups is incon- te. It recom- collection

removal, kets were nths after ed.

2 and nar and eone and ements to estigators n. 29. Dur- met with rdi to give the pros- 29.

diello told tell investi- and Gulics at the leaf fact neither t the site. rdi to tell di collected site, even orked there. pleaded not s and their ed that the e allegations harges could